The Pastimes of Nimai Pandit

Act Three - Nimai Pandit's Sankirtan Movement

Haridas Thakur Comes to Navadvip

Scene One - In Front of Sri Advaita Acharya's House

Srivasa: Who is Haridasa Thakur?

Advaita: Haridas Thakur is a great devotee of the Lord. He appeared in a family of Muslims, but he chants incessantly the Holy Name of Lord Krsna. Haridas Thakur makes no distinction among men, whether high or low and wherever devotional activities are in progress, he is seen in the midst of it all. His high degree of devotion activities are truly wonderful. Nawab Hussein Shah, the Muslim Emperor, hearing about him ordered his arrest. When Haridas Thakur was brought, bound, to his court, the Nawab was livid with anger. He cries, "What behavior is this? Why have you accepted the religion of a "Kafir," a non-believer?

Haridas replied, "The Lord is Supreme and Omnipotent. He appears in many forms but He accepts a human form specifically to redeem the fallen conditioned souls. The Supreme Lord is one, but to show special favor to His unalloyed devotees, He appears in different incarnations - thus seeming to be many. In whatever way the Lord wishes to reveal Himself to His devotees, they worship Him accordingly.

There is no distinction between Hindu, Muslim or Christian - whoever worships the Lord with devotion, his human-life is successful. The consideration of high or low is but a perversion of the mind. In whatever way the Lord showers His grace upon us, gratefully we should worship Him.

Srivasa: Oh, how glorious! It is wonderful to hear this! The Nawab must have been glad to hear this!

Advaita: The foolish Nawab paid no heed to the spiritual instructions. Rather, he acted on the poisonous advice of his Muslim pontiff and ordered his guards, (louder) "go and whip this knave in all the market places and if, after this, he is still alive, then I will be convinced about the authenticity of his religion."

Srivasa: How terrible!

Advaita: For one who has taken complete shelter of the Lord, what can a mere Governor do? They savagely rained whip-lashes upon him but to Haridas they were as a fresh shower of flowers. The Nawab, upon hearing about how Haridas had prayed for the guards, "O Merciful Lord, forgive these guards, for they are not responsible for their actions," fell down at the feet of Haridas

and begged forgiveness. Haridas Thakur satisfied the Nawab with warm and affectionate words but would not stay overnight, preferring to return to his bare hut to continue his meditations.

Srivasa: Really! How many pious deeds he must have performed to be crowned with such deep devotion. He has shown his devotion by example as well as words.

Advaita: I have heard that this holiest of saints will be coming here. By his favor, our devotion will certainly increase. There was once a destitute prostitute who simply by his association achieved firm realization of Lord Krsna.

Srivasa: What are the details? Please tell us.

Advaita: Some rascal, in an attempt to discredit Thakur Haridas, sent a woman of ill-repute to his lonely cottage. Arriving in the evening, she frankly expressed that she wanted her base carnal desires satisfied by him. Haridas Thakur replied that he could not do any activity until he had fulfilled his vow of chanting a prescribed number of Holy Names. She sat the entire night and listened to the Thakur's chanting. The sun rose and he told her to come back that evening. That night and the next were like the first night. The prostitute, overwhelmed with awe and reverence, threw herself at the feet of Haridas Thakur. The kindly sage initiated the repentant woman into the chanting of the Lord's Holy Name and left that place to her. Now, Vaisnavas come from miles around to hear from this renounced lady as she absorbs herself day and night in devotional service.

Srivasa: Just see! A devotee is a touchstone - turning iron into gold! When is Haridas Thakur coming our way?

Advaita: I do not know exactly when, but I have heard that soon he will come to Nadia.

Scene Two

Neighbor: Hey, now listen here! Are you not going to allow anyone to sleep? As soon as a few of you get together, you start howling like wolves! Without shrieking, your Lord Hari cannot hear or what? (pointing at Mukunda) Now, you have also ganged up with them, poisoning the entire land? What else! Hailing from a good family, giving up work and household just to join the club, and bray like an ass!

Mukunda: But sir, we simply glorify the Supreme Lord, Hari and nothing else. We perform congregational chanting.

Neighbor: If you are singing the glories of the Lord, then why do you bray like asses? Is it not possible to repeat the Lord's name softly in one's mind? How is it possible to study in such unruly conditions - always someone is wailing, "O Lord of my heart! Where are You now!" It sounds like some frivolous refrain, a new concoction! I warn you, no good will come of it.

Are the people who work to make this city great not supposed to sleep so that they can "benefit" from your devotions? I warn you, after a hard day's work, people want their peace and quiet and their recreation.

2nd Neighbor: Does a Vaisnava sleep with open eyes, singing, "Do not sleep my mind! Do not sleep my mind!" I make it clear to you, mister, this can't go on in Nadia!

Srivasa: Nadia is the place for chanting Lord Hari's name for here Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu will inaugerate the Sankirtan Movement. From here, this chanting will spread to every town and village.

2nd Neighbor: I shall go to the other important men in town and tell them that you people are stubborn and uncooperative. If they want you out of Nadia, then you will be!
(they leave)

Srivasa: O Savior of the Weak, when will devotion rise within their hearts? How long before the residents of Nadia become maddened with the Lord's Holy Name?

Advaita: I can see with my transcendental vision that soon the Lord's name will be propagated all over the Universe like a tidal wave. Fully intoxicated with the Lord's honey-dew name, day and night shall pass in thrill. What fear does a Vaisnava have when the heart is saturated with the Holy Name? Sing Hari's Name with all your energy, Brothers!

All: Haribol! Jai Radhe!
(kirtan)

Advaita: How fine! How wonderful! What stranger is that in the kirtan, singing with such a melodious voice? He looks like a perfect Vaisnava - full of life, bright as the sun! He must be some great sadhu.

Haridas: (stepping forward) Respected sir, I am Haridas, a humble servant of Lord Hari. I came here, attracted by your kirtan, to associate with the Lord's devotees. Now my life has attained perfection. Please tell me about Lord Krsna; appease my parched soul.

All: Haribol! Haribol!

Advaita: Blessed truly is the land of Nadia, and here is that great saint that we have heard so much about - an embodiment of pure devotion! Now that you have come to my residence, allow me to hear about Lord Krsna from you!

Haridas: Dear sir, I had one wish in my heart, that the Holy Name will engladden all. Now I perceive deep within me, that the propagator of the Holy Name has taken birth. He's here, I have come to see Him.

Srivasa: Who is this preacher? How long will it be before we can freely chant the Lord's name? In a great festive mood, the Vaisnavas will congregate. In ecstatic joy, flood the atmosphere with singing and chanting!

Haridas: Then kindly hear - last night, as I was in deep meditation, I beheld with spriritual vision an exquisite form - He was full of transcendental brilliance and spoke with honey-mellow tones, instructing me to come to Nadia saying, "I have appeared in the human form in Nadia to distribute the Lord's Holy Name; but the time is not yet right. When all the Vaisnavas from everywhere assemble in Nadia, then the festival of the Holy Names will commence!"

Advaita: I told you! I told you all that our very own Lord, Krsna, has appeared! Now the entire world will be flooded with the Holy Names. Hear this confirmed by a sadhu. What do I fear now? No more inhibitions will I entertain - come let us "wail and bray" to our heart's content!

All: Haribol! Haribol! Haribol!

Devotee: Srila Haridas Thakur! My mind is like the turbulent waters of an ocean of anxiety! I pray at your lotus feet - I would like to hear something about devotion from you. Please instruct me - what is left of devotion without jnana or knowledge?

Haridas: You have inquired about the science of devotion - this is truly kind of you; I shall say as much as I know. To acquire knowledge, one has to undergo severe austerities and physical pains in order to conquer the carnal urges. This process is dry and boring. But, devotion to Lord Krsna is a priceless gem in the inner sanctorum of the heart. There is no one who is refused this treasure, whether he be poor or weak.
The nectarean taste of devotion sweetens the days and nights. Devotion is the rarest prize of human birth, where even sensual enjoyments and salvation kneels down fawning - Ah! Fathomless is the profundity of devotion.

2nd Devotee: How can devotion bloom in my heart without knowledge to guide me? I have been analyzing matter by speculative means in order to understand the essence of all perceptions. What other knowledge can distinguish reality from imagination?

Haridas: The exalted realm of devotion is something very unique. There is no consideration of auspicious or inauspicious in its execution. The mind takes whatever course it will, independent of reason or circumstances. The entire being, once magnetized by devotion, ridicules material gains and failures. Devotion is the very life and devotion is the only cause of devotion.

3rd Devotee: This does not sound very consistent. If the mind goes where it desires, then what is the condition of our intelligence, morality, and character? How can we then vanquish the vices?

Haridas: The one who makes a distinction between proper and improper is in need of intelligence or a sense of morality to suppress his base instincts. But, he who is without material desires, what power does he lack?

Just ponder a while - the cowherd damsels of Vrndavana would run to see Krsna without any apparent reason. They voluntarily invite illrepute. Oblivious to all else, they freely wept, being unable to see Krsna. Sobbing, they kept repeating, "Where is Krsna, the light of my life, my treasure?" I consider that these ladies have achieved devotion with great ease and without treading the analytical path to approach the Supreme Truth.

2nd Devotee: It is understandable, the joy the gopis felt on seeing Krsna, but why did they feel such pain at the thought of separation from Krsna?

Haridas: Knowledge emphatically denounces attachment and suffering, yet just see what devotional emotions are in play in Vrndavana? Ever fresh loving mellows bloom like fragrant flowers, without consideration of pain or pleasure, right or wrong. Their whole consciousness is absorbed in Krsna, whether sad or cheerful. No logic can influence the gopis.

Srivasa: What is the use of futile arguments? Come, let us sing the glories of the Lord together!

2nd Devotee: Today, I have received a new life. Haribol! Haribol!

Advaita: Come Thakurji, let us go inside and sing behind closed doors, otherwise these atheists will vex us.
(Everyone leaves.)